CHATS ABOUT WINE

C. E. HAWKER

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Chats about Wine

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By

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Preface

THIS book does not aspire to be, in any sense, a treatise on wine, nor does it presume to teach anything to either experts or connoisseurs.

Its object is to try and awaken an interest in the subject among those who have not hitherto given much thought or attention to it, and to point out how important it is in these days of fraud and adulteration that wine should be obtained from proper and reliable sources.

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CHAPTER I

What is Wine?

IN every clime, and under every sun, from the very earliest periods of time of which we have any record, wine has been considered as one of the choicest gifts of a beneficent Providence, and in the old days of Biblical antiquity it was always looked upon, in conjunction with corn and oil, as a symbol of national well-being and material prosperity. The legendary and mystical associations

which cluster round its history have inspired the poet's song and the orator's panegyric from time immemorial, and writers, sacred and secular, classical and modern, have been unanimous in eulogising its virtues and advocating its use. Among civilised nations wine has always been, and is still, closely connected, not only with religious observances, but with all festive and social ceremonies, both public and private, and that it "makes glad the heart of man" now, as in days of old, few people will be disposed to deny. Taken in moderation its pleasurable and health-giving properties are all but universally acknowledged, and experience seems to justify the

belief that, as compared with the innumerable benefits it confers, the harm produced by its misuse is comparatively insignificant.

What then, it may be asked, is this wonderful elixir of life, which is almost as old as the world itself and yet is ever overflowing with the exuberance of youth; which restores and invigorates us when the powers of life are low; uplifts and cheers us in days of sorrow and gloom; evokes and enhances our joys and pleasures; and which, by the inherent living force it is endowed with, gives animation, energy and inspiration to every sense and faculty we possess?

Precise definitions in matters of food and drink are difficult at

all times, and particularly so in these days, but it is safe to say that wine is, or should be, a beverage derived exclusively from the perfectly fermented juice of the grape. The quality and nature of true wine, however, depend upon a variety of circumstances. The species of vine, the climate of the region in which it is grown, the soil, the methods of cultivation adopted, the processes favoured for the treatment and maturing of the expressed juices, the vintage —all have their influence upon the final product, and to a very large extent too, in many cases.

As a rule the most important feature about wine, from the ordinary consumers' point of view,

is its alcoholic potency, but the stimulating power of wine and its use dietetically are by no means to be gauged by the amount of alcohol it contains. The volatile ethers and extractives exercise a great deal of influence upon its exhilarating powers, and, in this particular, wine stands alone amongst alcoholic beverages, for a mere admixture of spirits and water has a very different effect upon the human system, and, instead of being beneficial, is almost invariably harmful. The constituents of wine indeed, apart from alcohol, are surprisingly wide in their range, including as they do, in greater or lesser degree, volatile oil, ethers, grape-sugar, colour-

ing matter, vegetable albumen, tannic and other acids, and tartrates; and the character of a wine is largely determined by the presence or absence of these constituents, or the proportion in which they are combined in any particular case.

It is through shutting their eyes to its complexity that the opponents of wine have strayed into one of their most mischievous errors. Many of the blood-curdling experiments to demonstrate the noxiousness of wine have been made by mixing food, not with wine, but with ardent spirits or with chemist's alcohol. Such a test is no test at all. A flask of wine, like a bottle of ginger beer, con-

tains alcohol, but it contains many other things as well. First and foremost nearly all its bulk consists of rain-water, exquisitely filtered and distilled by the kindly sun and subtly enriched with vitality by the silent alchemy of nature. The man who drains a whole bottle of sound wine absorbs only a single glass of alcohol ; and it must always be remembered that the alcohol of natural wine differs from the alcohol of the chemist's laboratory as much as bees' honey differs from chemists' saccharine or glucose. It follows, therefore, that when a sensible wine-drinker is confronted by scares and panics concerning the horrors of alcohol he remains unmoved, for he knows very

well that his trusty beverage is not mere alcohol, but alcohol modified and corrected by the other and more abundant constituents of wine.

Broadly speaking, wine may be divided into three principal classes—natural wines, fortified wines and sparkling wines. The first class comprises those in which the "must" has been allowed to proceed to the utmost limit of its fermentation, yielding generally "dry" wines practically devoid of sweetness, such as Claret, Burgundy and Hock. These wines are light alcoholically and are usually considered to be the most wholesome for habitual consumption as beverages. Fortified wines, on the

other hand, are those in which the fermentation has been arrested by the introduction of some form of spirit, and such wines are generally more or less sweet, and of rather high alcoholic strength. Of these Port, Sherry and Madeira may be mentioned as representative examples. Sparkling wines, such as Champagne, are those in which carbonic acid is formed by an after-fermentation in the bottle, and they may be classed among the comparatively light alcoholic group, though their stimulating properties are relatively higher owing to the presence of the carbonic acid. These wines are either "Brut," or of varying degrees of sweetness, according to the ex-

tent of "liqueuring" during the process of manufacture, and, as they are wines that especially lend themselves to adulteration, it is very important to obtain them from honest sources.

The assertion is sometimes made that, taking the world over, more people suffer from the consumption of too little alcohol than from too much, and although this assertion may not be accepted without reserve by the extreme section of the temperance party, there is unquestionably an element of truth in the statement. It is, of course, quite credible that there are some people who may be better without recourse to any kind of stimulant whatsoever, but all experience

seems to point to the fact that the majority of men and women, and especially those who have arrived at middle life, are much benefited by taking wine with their meals ; and this view has recently been confirmed by a most important medical pronouncement on the subject.

It is especially unfortunate in this connexion that the word "stimulant" should have acquired a bad name. When one man tells another that a mutual friend "takes stimulants," both speaker and hearer rightly look grave, for they are well aware that successive drams and nips can only grant fits of false and short-lived energy, at the price of long-drawn re-

action and collapse ; but in these cases it is necessary to distinguish between spirits and grape juice, between the dram-drinker and the lover of good wine.

In the first place the reaction ensuing upon a few draughts of wine is much less marked and less trying than the reaction after indulgence in whisky, or even tea. In the second place a genuine wine lover feels no inclination to imbibe grape juice both in and out of season. He drinks at meal times and when his day's work is done. Excepting a few indiscriminate Champagne drinkers, only the heroes and villains in romances and plays drain goblets of wine in order to inflame themselves to proud

words, and doughty deeds. In real life, when the slight stimulation of wine has passed away, the sequel is not dullness and heaviness, but a genial sense of well-being. In short, the much-maligned reaction one hears so much about is merely an unfriendly name for one of the great charms of wine, and what wine's foes call its reactionary defects wine's friends call its sedative merits. After all the proof of the drink is in the drinking, and no amount of theoretical opposition can set aside the grateful experience of a hundred generations of men.

Wine being a valuable nerve and brain stimulant, it is, of course, quite in accordance with the nature of

things that its abuse should be detrimental to those who indulge in it too freely. But a similar objection applies to many other things which are in themselves beneficial to the human race. We cannot "over-eat" ourselves, for example, without suffering more or less severely from the consequent effects; and if the excess becomes habitual, health may be permanently impaired.

Statistics all go to prove, however, that in strictly wine-drinking communities not only is intemperance rare, but even where it exists the evil effects are comparatively unimportant. It is only in spirit-drinking countries that alcoholic excess is prevalent, and the

effects become an element of serious import. If alcohol, as taken in the form of wine, is the potent poison that some extremists affirm it to be, it may fairly be questioned how it is that those countries that have always made use of it have not gradually decayed and died out. The principal nations of Europe, for instance, which lead the world in all that constitutes high and intellectual living, are very far indeed from being total abstainers; and the Jews, who cannot be accused of being indifferent to the fascinations of wine as a beverage, do not, after an existence of several thousand years, appear to have in any way suffered from it, or to have deteriorated in

physique, mental capacity or longevity.

How then can these unassailable facts be explained unless upon the assumption that wine was meant for our judicious use? Like all other good things it is of course liable to abuse, but it cannot, at least, be denied that taken in moderation it adds to the agreeableness of life, and, as has been truly said, whatever adds to the agreeableness of life adds to its resources and power.

CHAPTER II

Wine Merchants—and Wine Merchants

IN the "good old days" when stage-coach travelling was regarded as a rapid means of transit, and hot-headed gentlemen settled their disputes at so many paces, the wine merchant's calling was a respected and dignified branch of commerce. Firms of good standing, whose members were frequently men of education and refinement, enjoyed the patronage of a distinguished *clientèle*, and only sound wine left their cellars for those of their customers.

Their establishments, too, presented an aspect of substantiality and repose, which seemed to harmonise naturally with the stocks of rare vintages and venerable wines which were always to be found there, and which were appreciated at their proper value by consumers whose tastes had not then been vitiated by the adulterated concoctions so liberally supplied by the unscrupulous dealer of the present day.

The old-time wine merchant, nevertheless, had competition to face, and he could not afford to ignore the expediency of arranging his prices so that they might not, value for value, compare unfavourably with the charges which

ruled in other establishments. This he was able to do legitimately, however, and without endangering his jealousy-guarded reputation—without, in short, having to substitute inferior brands for those of accepted repute. The competition, too, was fair : there was no necessity, and little temptation, to institute a policy of "cutting," such as is now so general in the wine trade, as in others, and the time had not yet arrived when the wine merchants had to contend with the enterprise of outside traders. The eighteenth and early nineteenth century grocers stuck to their own trade, and did not attempt to sell wine, and during at least the first half of the late

Queen Victoria's reign, other shopkeepers confined their energies strictly to the exploitation of commodities which came legitimately within the scope of their particular trade. "Off licences," too, were unknown in those days, and it would then have been regarded as quite as much a breach of the commercial proprieties for a tea merchant to submit wines for sale, as it would be considered incongruous or something worse, for the modern hosier or corn chandler to purvey fried fish.

In a word, the old-fashioned wine merchant of respectability and repute was a personality of some note, and he was, in his way, quite as necessary to the country

squire and other people of importance, as the family lawyer or the family doctor. Unfortunately, it is rather otherwise to-day, although, happily, the old-fashioned merchant, even if we find him in a new-century dress, is not yet wholly extinct. There are still surviving representatives of the old wine houses with reputations to lose and worthy traditions to maintain, who, in spite of misrepresentation, unfair methods of competition and unscrupulous trading, decline to depart from those usages of their calling which, in some cases, have been transmitted to them through many generations of honourable trading.

It is, however, a matter beyond question that for many years past the wine trade has passed through severe vicissitudes of fortune. Its domain has been encroached upon, more or less unwarrantably, from all sides. Retired Army officers and Civil servants have a special predilection for "going into wine," confident that the generosity of obliging friends will lend them their support, and, perhaps, ultimately prevent them going to the wall, which is the goal for which their inexperience and technical incapacity, in nine cases out of ten, best equips them. Shady adventurers, too, most naturally try their luck in a branch of business which is not without

its fascinations, and "on a commission basis," play havoc with legitimate wine trading. Then storekeepers, provision dealers and shopkeepers of all sorts and conditions, add "Our Wine Department" to their already promiscuous concerns, and perhaps do more harm to the genuine wine merchant's interests than any other branch of competition.

To begin with, apart from their all but complete ignorance of the inner side of the wine trade, such dealers are almost of necessity as poor judges of wine as they are greedy of profits. They listen to the blandishments of some unscrupulous commercial traveller, representing an equally unscru-

pulous principal, and readily buy the cheap and, of course, correspondingly unwholesome concoctions—rendered none the less so by their gaily attractive labels and capsules—which that worthy has to offer. At these establishments wine has become a byword, and the "special lines" in "Château" Clarets and Burgundies are only as a rule surpassed in nastiness by "our own bottlings" of "Tawny" or "Invalid" Port, which are invariably "strongly recommended," and given an air of respectability by the addition of cobwebs and whitewash to the bottle.

Nevertheless, in spite of the suspicions which one might reasonably suppose the intelligent

mind would attach to "wines" which were delivered with the kitchen soap and the servants' cheese, there are numbers of people who ought to know better, who have the hardihood to set such beverages before their unhappy guests, and even take an undisguised pride in the high-sounding, if unmistakably specious, labels which decorate the bottles. Some of us have been brought up to regard certain brands of wine as names to conjure with, but, thanks to the unblushingly impudent manner in which some traders retail the most noxious mixtures under fictitious titles, it is safer in certain houses to abstain from wine altogether, if, at all

events, there be any desire to treat one's palate and one's internal economy with the respect which is their due.

The unscrupulous wine dealer of these new-century times may be, and generally is, many things, but he is seldom an absolute fool. He is fully conscious, poor judge of wine as he may be, that his own vinous wares are, not to put too fine a point upon it, not quite all they should be. And so he permits the world-famous names of a few proprietary brands to appear on his wine lists, and these are often priced at a figure that commends itself to economically-minded buyers. The latter very naturally argue that if they can obtain a certain

brand of Champagne at, say, eighty shillings a dozen, for which they would have to pay a hundred shillings elsewhere, it would be folly, and the height of extravagance, not to purchase at the cheaper rate. If these buyers stopped short at these particular brands, and left the others of more questionable repute severely alone, all might be well for them, if not for the other side ; but, as has been suggested, your unscrupulous wine seller knows his business, and the presence of a few good names on his wine list is part of the trick. He knows very well that the average man or woman does not want to be troubled with more bills than are necessary, and if the

first purchase gives satisfaction the chances are that the next order will in all likelihood include one for some "specially recommended" beverage which he bottles at considerable gain to himself. Fortunately, however, discrimination in the selection of wines is still observed by a good many people who do not yield to the blandishments of a gaudy label, and treat the fetish of mere cheapness with the contempt it deserves. Competent judges of wine such as these are proof against the deception and trickery of the most enterprising of unscrupulous tradesmen, and adopt the more dignified course of sending their orders for wine to the proper quarters, know-

ing that they will then get what they want, and what they pay for, with immense advantage to their friends and themselves in the way of health and enjoyment.

Of recent years a somewhat new departure has been taken by certain traders against which a word of caution is needed. Furniture dealers, drapers, and even milliners, have now entered the field of the legitimate wine trader, and periodically advertise, in language more or less alluring, although not devoid of an element of shoppiness which rather discounts its convincing value in the estimation of the discriminating mind, that they have acquired "parcels" of wine with which they are in a

position to part at prices which offer a strong temptation to the ordinary purchaser. They circularise the public at large ; booklets and wine lists are scattered broadcast; and, in short, money is generously spent in making known their special offer. This manœuvre is, of course, mainly intended to advertise the business of the firm, for the advertiser assumes that the publicity thus secured will bring to his establishment purchasers whose requirements are not necessarily confined to wine.

The sale of these precious "parcels" of frequently worthless wine will of itself probably yield the tradesman a very good profit, but whether it does or not is immate-

rial. His other wares sell at figures which amply compensate him for any "sacrifice" he may make in the interests of his customers; so if the unfortunate individuals who have acquired a certain number of miscellaneous articles plus the "wine" find the "special vintages" undrinkable, the vendor of the "parcels" does not much mind; the other purchases will probably have given satisfaction, and the simple-minded customer may come again.

The astute tradesman has played up to the ignorance and cupidity of the bargain-hunters, and readily bluffed them into transferring money from their own pockets into his own capacious

maw. The "parcels" of wine were the decoy, and were the means of his regular stock "going off" at a convenient moment.

The foregoing are a few of the rather numerous pitfalls into which the confiding and the unwary may find themselves precipitated in the matter of their wine purchases.

Under such circumstances it is hardly a matter for surprise that the consumption of wine, and especially of good wine, is seriously declining. The most recent statistics go to show that Great Britain now stands sixth on the roll of wine-consuming countries. An analysis of these statistics indicates that for every glass of wine John

Bull takes, his French neighbour, with whom he is on such good terms, consumes no less than one hundred and twenty-five. In Belgium there is a wine consumption equivalent to four glasses to the Britisher's one, and in Germany it is six to one, beer-drinking notwithstanding. It would be interesting to know how much of this inequity on the part of the British consumption can be traced to the injurious influences already mentioned.

However this may be, it is some slight consolation to know that a ready remedy is at hand. The old and honourable trade of the wine merchant is still existent, and men of repute, whose wines are as irre-

proachable as their business methods and personal probity, are to be found in every city, and, be it added, in nearly every town of even modest pretensions as to population and trade. When the shrewd, hard-headed, well-meaning British public come to realise and recognise this truism, and also the significance to pocket and importance to health represented by the ability to procure sound wine from proper and reliable sources, the unholy reign of the unscrupulous and incompetent outsider, and the unprincipled and mendacious foreigner will alike have ceased. Honest, wholesome wine will then be restored to its former prestige and popularity,

and the respectable wine merchant will once more come into his own, and be able to perpetuate the sterling traditions of his calling.

CHAPTER III

Doctors and Wine

WE English, independent and practical though we be, are as a race "led by the nose." If we are old-fashioned, we are prone to accept political and religious dogmas with little or no attempt being made to prove their truth; and when we are ill or "run down," we place ourselves unreservedly "under the doctor," ready to believe implicitly whatever he may choose to say, and to swallow unhesitatingly whatever medicinal compound he may think fit to prescribe.

Nevertheless, the average medical man has often a failing, and that a somewhat serious one. He seldom knows much about wine, for, for some unexplained reason, a knowledge of the health-giving and curative properties of genuine wines, and the special characteristics of the different varieties, is not included in the curriculum of the ordinary medical student. He is crammed with enough learning about drugs to fit him for the post of a qualified dispensing chemist, and he can cover a page with cabalistic chemical symbols without turning a hair, and with the skill which comes of long practice. If you are suffering from any ordinary ailment he will prob-

ably diagnose your case correctly and prescribe accordingly, and very likely the discomfort will soon be over. But how does he deal with the hard-working city man who does not require medicines, but whose nerves and digestive arrangements would be all the better for a few glasses of pure and generous wine with his meals, or with the anæmic woman, whose impoverished blood keeps her health constantly below par, and who would be equally benefited by a similar régime? Such patients are quite likely to be advised by the ordinary doctor to take milk or lemon-squash, or possibly one of those much-advertised, but frequently fraudulent

and unwholesome concoctions, which go by the name of "Medicated" or "Meat" Wines, or some such misleading title, but which usually have very little relation to either meat, wine or medicine in the proper sense of the words.

One of the chief disadvantages, however, of this want of knowledge and discrimination on the part of the average doctor in matters concerning wine, is the danger he runs of becoming a victim to the wiles of certain firms who have inferior wines from new countries to introduce, or special "lines" of their own to push. These enterprising people, by means of free samples, and flowery circulars which generally extol

the "medicinal" properties of their wares, have not much difficulty in imposing upon the unwary doctor, and sooner or later they generally succeed in turning him—though the worthy curer of bodies is unconscious of the fact—into a valuable advertising agent for themselves.

In days gone by the most successful members of the medical fraternity were not likely to be taken in so easily. They were good judges of wine, and were well aware of its stimulating and healing properties. They did not hesitate to advise lackadaisical maidens to drink it with their meals rather than water, and the blood-making and other health-giving

virtues of sound Claret and Burgundy were recognised by every practitioner in the kingdom.

Notwithstanding our boasted advances in all that pertains to temperance and hygiene, there were fewer pale-faced girls and flabby youths in those times than one sees in our streets to-day ; and since the world was young, all experience goes to prove that pure wine, if taken in that moderation which is wise in all things, is the most natural, and therefore the most wholesome, beverage for man.

In cases of illness, a heavy responsibility naturally rests upon the doctor in all matters pertaining to food and drink. So far as

food is concerned, this responsibility he is generally willing and able to accept. But how often, when he gets beyond the beaten track of ordinary dietaries and drugs which are familiar to him and orders wine, does he insist on the importance of procuring the supply from a reliable source? Yet it is as important for wine to be obtained from a respectable and dependable wine merchant as for prescriptions to be dispensed by a fully-qualified chemist. A doctor would hardly approve of his medicines being obtained from, say, the local grocer, and yet the wine he prescribes may, in some cases, be procured from the most undesirable sources, and the patient's

health injuriously affected, if this important point is overlooked.

There often arises, of course, the question of expense when wine is ordered, and where outlay is a consideration the physician is sometimes placed in a position of difficulty on that score. Good Champagne, for instance, is admittedly one of the most valuable stimulants in many cases of illness, but the best brands are costly and the cheaper ones are not always to be depended on. There are, however, in the case of this particular wine, excellent substitutes available. Sparkling Burgundy or Saumur, if carefully selected, might often take the place of the higher-priced Champagnes ; and a spark-

ling white Médoc, called "Sparkling Ducru," has also recently come into the market and is sold at about half the price of the fashionable brands of Champagne. As this wine carries with it the credentials of having been made at one of the most renowned estates in the Médoc country, it is safe to predict that it will soon become very popular with those who can appreciate a really pure and well-made sparkling wine.

With the wealth of resource which the principal wine-producing countries of the world possess, and which must surely be meant for the benefit of mankind, it is difficult to account for the prejudice which certain members of the

medical profession still have with regard to the use of wine in illness and convalescence. It seems impossible that this aversion, though fortunately it is not very widespread, should continue indefinitely; but much might be done to remove it if our principal wine merchants would make an effort to popularise really good and pure wines, and if doctors themselves would forbid their patients taking any wine that could not show a clear record as to quality and origin.

There never was a time when light, wholesome wines such as Claret and Burgundy—pre-eminently the wines for debility and convalescence—could be obtained

of such good quality and at such a moderate price as in the present day; and there is, therefore, much, both from a professional and from a trade point of view, calling for intelligent reconsideration, in the interests both of public and individual health.

As good judges of wine are always in a minority, a keen surveillance of their patients' beverages ought to be exercised by medical men among rich and poor alike, but naturally it will be in the homes of the less well-to-do that an observant doctor will detect the highest percentage of outrages perpetrated in the name of wine. To the poorer classes "wine" usually means Port and

Sherry, and these two are the wines which can be most easily and profitably imitated by the shameless blendings of a little common wine with abundant concoctions of sugar, dyes, grain-spirit and chemical flavourings. Seeing that the poor have to make heavy sacrifices in order to purchase these so-called wines for their sick, the blenders who exploit human misfortune by selling a poison in place of a medicine, at a profit of several hundred per cent., deserve a front place among the enemies of the State. Our English laws against adulteration and substitution are defective, but the existing Food and Drugs Acts provide machinery with which

more than a little can be done. A few weeks of public-spirited vigilance and energy on the part of the medical profession would go a long way towards stamping out a heartless and even murderous fraud, and surely practitioners would do themselves no small honour by becoming in this sense guardians of the poor.

Of course, when one remembers that it is proverbial for doctors to differ, one is not surprised that they find a convenient bone of contention in the question of the wisdom or otherwise of prescribing alcohol for their patients in cases of illness. A certain percentage of medical men are always to be found ready to advance ar-

guments against the utility of alcohol in any form, or in any degree of microscopical quantity, either in illness or in health ; but it is satisfactory to note that a large number of clinical specialists and practitioners of the highest reputation in the roll of medical distinction have recently spoken out plainly on this subject, and have published, through the medium of *The Lancet*, a statement which shows that they do not at all subscribe to the extreme views put forward by some of their professional brethren. Though this important manifesto has produced a lively discussion, both in the medical world and amongst intelligent laymen, there can be no doubt that

it cannot fail, in the long run, to be of great advantage to the community at large, both in sanctioning, from the highest medical point of view, the moderate consumption of wine as a beverage for daily use, and also in restoring it to its rightful place in the list of remedial agents.

CHAPTER IV

Wine at Hotels and Restaurants

OF late years many changes have taken place in the every-day life of the community, and although the Englishman's home is still his castle, and home is still "sweet home," the flat, the hotel and the restaurant are silently working a revolution in the social habits of the upper and middle classes. Hospitality is becoming less and less dispensed upon the host's own mahogany, and more and more in public places, with the result that the greatest consumption of wine now takes place,

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not in private houses, but in restaurants and hotels. Accordingly it is desirable to inquire how the proprietors of these establishments are discharging their responsibilities, and rising to their opportunities in this particular matter.

To tell the plain truth, restaurateurs and hotel-keepers, as a class, go about the purveying of wine with an indifference to their customers' and their own ultimate interests which could hardly be greater if the whole fraternity were secretly leagued to stamp out wine drinking altogether. In all other respects hotels and restaurants have been continuously improving, but their wine, the profitable ar-

ticle out of which such places are mainly built up and kept going, is generally both poor and dear.

It is interesting to imagine some gentleman of the "old school" arriving for the first time at a twentieth-century hotel. At his first sight of the liveried servants in the marble hall, almost as gorgeous as a king's retainers in a palace, at his first trial of the lift raising him to the sixth floor more swiftly than his legs could carry him up a dozen stairs, at his first acquaintance with the electric light, the tape, the telephone, in short, amidst all the wonders of modern luxury, the astonished guest would naturally expect the kitchen and the cellar to be equally ahead of

the old-fashioned inns. And so far as concerns the food, served amidst flowers and music, at softly-lit tables, he would not be disappointed. He would find that our cooks have indeed made headway since the day when Voltaire twitted England with being the land of "a hundred religions and only one sauce." But when, emboldened by all this efficiency and progress, he opens the wine list in the belief that he is about to enjoy an exquisite surprise in wine, what happens? He finds that his best friend has failed him. The good wine, for which he would cheerfully forfeit a thousand tapes and a gross of telephones, refuses to appear. The stuff the waiter pours into his glass

may not necessarily be impure or bad; indeed it may be drinkable, always provided the guest is willing to pay half-crowns for what the proprietor has bought with sixpences. But while everything else in the place is better than of yore, the wine, which should be the crown and glory of the feast, is worse.

In this matter cause and effect are becoming curiously complicated. Having succeeded in lowering the wine standard through the absence of effective protests from those who know what good wine is, the hotel and restaurant keepers are nowadays dealing mainly with a rising generation upon whose uneducated and undiscerning palates anything with an

important-looking label can be palmed off almost with impunity. If the lift should stick between two floors, or if the electric bells refused to ring, or if the hot taps in the bathroom yielded only tepid water, the guest affected would make instant complaint, and therefore such things are hardly ever allowed to happen. But when the hotel or restaurant keeper commits the offence of serving ill-chosen, ill-cellared, or perhaps downright dishonest wine at enormous prices, the chances are that his otherwise fastidious client will cheerfully drain his glass without the faintest suspicion that he has become the half-poisoned victim of greed or incompetence.

WINE AT HOTELS

As regards hotel and restaurant wine in general, and the lower-priced table wines in particular, it is high time for the quality to go up and for the prices to go down. So far as quality is concerned, the proprietors of public establishments ought to consider it as disgraceful to supply unwholesome or ill-kept wine as to serve questionable fish or tainted meat. At the head of every wine list there ought to be a guarantee that all the wines thereinafter priced are the pure juice of the grape, and that they pertain to the vineyards and vintage years named in the lists. To introduce this reform would cost the honest and competent proprietor whose wines are

pure and good, no more than a few extra drops of printers' ink, and as for the unfairly or badly conducted establishments, the absence of such a guarantee would enable lunchers and diners to draw their own conclusions, and to betake themselves to safer quarters.

In contending also that the prices of wines drunk in public ought to go down, it is, of course, not claimed that such wines should be made as cheap as similar wines consumed at one's own table. The restaurant keeper has many expenses to meet, and he makes no direct charge for the use of his heavily rented and rated premises, nor for the wear and tear of

his costly furnishings. It is, however, hard on wine drinkers, who have always been his best friends, that the business should be so arranged as to yield comparatively little profit upon the food, while several hundred per cent. are exacted from the wine.

The proprietors of hotels and restaurants are, as a rule, a very astute, far-seeing and business-like body of men, and it is somewhat remarkable, therefore, that they have not yet discovered that they themselves are to blame for the large decrease in the consumption of wine at their establishments, about which they so often complain. For a considerable time past, wine shippers and

merchants have also been lamenting a diminution in wine orders on the part of the public, and we are sometimes told that all this is due to the energy shown by the advocates of temperance. To those, however, who understand the facts of the case this assertion is absurd. There is no doubt, of course, that temperance principles are making headway in this country, but among the educated classes who drink wine, temperance means moderation and not total abstinence. The educated advocate of temperance is a broad-minded man of all-round sympathies, and while he believes in temperance, he does not become a total abstainer, as such a course

would, according to his views, be intemperance and not temperance at all. Whatever, therefore, may be said as regards spirits, the decrease in the consumption of wine is not in the least likely to be due to the activity of the temperance reformers, but it is probably largely to be accounted for by the fact that the people who do drink wine are compelled to drink considerably less than they would like to, owing to the high prices which prevail at hotels and restaurants where so many meals are now taken, and by being obliged to lessen their consumption, or abstain altogether, at these places, they acquire the habit of doing so elsewhere.

A comparison of the prices charged by wine merchants to ordinary private customers, with those charged by first-class hotels and restaurants to their patrons, is a very instructive study, and it serves a useful purpose in showing that, even if the same quality of wine were supplied, these establishments would make a very large profit indeed ; whereas by supplying, as they generally do, wines of a very inferior quality to those of the wine merchant, the profit is enormously increased and becomes quite extortionate. This method of doing business may answer very well for a time, but only at the cost of bringing good wine into disrepute, lessening its

consumption and inflicting serious injury on the legitimate wine trade, which must sooner or later react upon those who have been the cause of it.

This particular phase of the question has been a serious one for many years past, and although hotel and restaurant proprietors have been shamefully neglecting the interests of their customers, vitiating their tastes and lightening their pockets, the people principally concerned have made but a feeble protest. This has been a mistake, and the time has certainly arrived when strong measures should be taken to bring about some reform. The matter rests with the public, and they should

decline to patronise any hotel or restaurant where the prices are not reasonably moderate, and where the proprietors do not give some sort of guarantee, as far as it is possible to do so, that their wine is procured from reliable sources. We live in an age when rich as well as poor expect to get fair value for the money they expend, and it is those who recognise the existence of this feeling, and adapt their business arrangements to meet it in a practical spirit, who will best promote their own interests.

CHAPTER V

Wines of France

AMONG the wine-producing countries of the world the sunny and fertile land of France must undoubtedly be accorded the first place. Almost the whole region, from the Rhine to the Pyrenees, abounds in prolific vineyards, and wines of every description are produced under the most favourable conditions of climate, soil and manufacture. The grand red wines of this favoured country are universally acknowledged to be the finest in the world, and its white varieties, headed by Château

Yquem and Montrachet, are hardly, if at all, surpassed by even the renowned growths of Johannisberg and Tokay, whilst in the matter of sparkling wines France is admittedly without a rival.

The heart of the industry may be said to lie in the department of the Gironde, the chief town and seaport of which is Bordeaux. The red wines of this district, known under the generic name of Claret, are of a beautiful ruby colour and are renowned for their elegance, delicacy and seductive bouquet. The finest qualities are produced in a narrow strip of land called the Médoc, which extends north from Bordeaux along the left banks of the Rivers Garonne and Gironde,

and the "Grands Crûs" of this beautiful vine-garden are divided into five different classes, known as the "classed growths." They are as follows :—

First Growths

Château Lafite	*Pauillac.*
Château Margaux	*Margaux.*
Château Latour	*Pauillac.*
Château Haut Brion	*Pessac.*

Second Growths

Mouton	*Pauillac.*
Rauzan Ségla	*Margaux.*
Rauzan Gassies	*do.*
Leoville Lascases	*Saint Julien.*
Leoville Poyferré	*do.*
Leoville Barton	*do.*
Durfort Vivens	*Margaux.*
Lascombes	*do.*
Gruaud Larose Sarget	*Saint Julien.*
Gruaud Larose	*do.*
Brane Cantenac	*Cantenac.*

Pichon Longueville . . *Pauillac.*
Pichon Longueville
Lalande *do.*
Ducru Beaucaillou. . . *Saint Julien.*
Cos d'Estournel . . . *Saint Estèphe.*
Montrose . . . . . *do.*

Third Growths

Kirwan . . . . . *Cantenac.*
Château d'Issan . . . *do.*
Lagrange . . . . . *Saint Julien.*
Langoa . . . . . *do.*
Château Giscours . . . *Labarde.*
Malescot Saint Exupéry . *Margaux.*
Cantenac Brown . . . *Cantenac.*
Palmer . . . . . *do.*
La Lagune . . . . . *Ludon.*
Desmirail . . . . . *Margaux.*
Calon Ségur . . . . *Saint Estèphe.*
Ferrière . . . . . *Margaux.*
M. d'Alesmeis Becker . *do.*

Fourth Growths

Saint Pierre . . . . . *Saint Julien.*
Branaire Duluc. . . . *do.*
Talbot . . . . . *do.*

Duhart Milon	*Pauillac.*
Poujet	*Cantenac.*
La Tour Carnet	*Saint Laurent.*
Rochet	*Saint Estèphe.*
Château Beychevelle	*Saint Julien.*
Le Prieuré	*Cantenac.*
Marquis de Therme	*Margaux.*

Fifth Growths

Pontet Canet	*Pauillac.*
Batailley	*do.*
Grand Puy Lacoste	*do.*
Ducasse Grand Puy	*do.*
Lynch Bages	*do.*
Lynch Moussas	*do.*
Dauzac	*Lacarde.*
Mouton d'Armailhacq	*Pauillac.*
Le Terte	*Arsac.*
Haut Bages	*Pauillac.*
Pédesclaux	*do.*
Belgrave	*Saint Laurent.*
Camensac	*do.*
Cos Labory	*Saint Estèphe.*
Clerc Milon	*Pauillac.*
Croizet Bages	*do.*
Cantemerle	*Macau.*

In addition to the above many other very good wines known as "Bourgeois growths" are to be found in the Médoc ; and the districts of Graves and St Emilion also produce wines which bear a very high reputation. It does not either at all follow that the better of these "unclassed" wines are always, as a matter of course, inferior to the "classed" growths, although technically they may rank after them. With Clarets, as in fact with all wines, the vintage is of far greater importance than the name, however illustrious it may be. A Bourgeois growth of a good year, for instance, is very much to be preferred to a "classed" growth of a bad one. It is, therefore, of the

first importance to realise the fact that the name of the Château or district from which the wine comes is only a guarantee of origin, not necessarily of quality, and that the vintage is practically everything.

Whatever the category to which they belong, all good red wines of the Médoc and the neighbouring districts are recognised by certain well-marked characteristics which distinguish them from all other wines, and they possess the important hygienic quality that not only are they refreshing, wholesome and invigorating, and, in a word, true natural tonics, but they can be taken habitually as beverages, in even very liberal quanti-

ties, without being followed by any evil effects.

Sauternes and Graves

Though rather overshadowed by the grand red Crûs, the Gironde has still some reason to be proud of its white wines. These are generally known under the names of Sauterne, Graves and Barsac, the most famous being Château Yquem, which is one of the finest white wines in the world. Others of renown are Château La Tour Blanche and Château Suduirant. Of the Graves wines Château Carbonnieux has a considerable reputation, and among other Château Saint Bris may be mentioned as a dry, natural wine of extremely

pleasant and flavoury characteristics.

The vintage in the Sauterne country is usually rather late, and in the making of the best wines quantity is entirely sacrificed to quality, the grapes being allowed to hang for a long time before being picked, and only gathered when they arrive at the proper stage of mellowness. The result of this is that wines so made are very sweet and luscious, in some cases almost like liqueurs, and the best ones are very much esteemed and exceedingly costly.

Burgundy

Next to those of the Médoc, the generous vinous growths of Bur-

gundy are the best-known French red wines in England. The finest qualities are grown in the department of the Côte d'Or, the sunward flank of a long low upland, whose grapes drink so deeply of the golden heat that the wines of Burgundy are much more generous than the wines grown farther south in the Gironde. As in the case of Médoc wines, the best growths are kept distinct and have a very high reputation. In the front rank we find the magnificent Romanée Conti, Chambertin, Clos Vougeot, Richebourg and La Tache ; and other well-known wines are Musigny, Corton, Nuits, Volnay, Pommard and Beaune.

The higher-classed Burgundies

are full-bodied and velvety, of a rich ruby colour, and endowed with a beautiful perfume, and they are rightly considered to be among the most perfect of wines. Alcoholically they are somewhat stronger than Claret, and are also perhaps rather more prone to disagree with some people, if drunk habitually, than the lighter wines of Bordeaux.

Ordinary white Burgundies are usually known as Chablis and Pouilly ; and they are light, dry and generally wholesome wines. The finest white variety of the Côte d'Or is, however, Montrachet, which every Burgundian maintains is the finest white wine in the world. It is full-bodied, with a

delicate soft flavour and great richness, and will keep for any length of time. When genuine it commands a very high price, but, like the grand Romanée, it is not often to be met with.

Champagne

The art of making effervescing or sparkling wines was first practised in the ancient province of Champagne, hence the name ; but it has since spread to other parts of France and to foreign countries as well. It is said to have been discovered by a certain wine-loving prior about 200 years ago, and knowing what we do about the worthy monks of those times, and their appreciation of the good

things of this life, we may accept this version of its origin without any misgivings as to its veracity. The best Champagne comes from the neighbourhood of Rheims and Epernay, but it is more generally known by the name of the shipper than by that of any special locality, and this being the case the prestige of the maker is of course all-important. Such names as Cliquot, Heidsieck, Krug, Lanson, Moët, Mumm, Pommery, Roederer, etc., will occur to everyone as carrying with them a guarantee of high-class quality and excellence.

The most esteemed wines are not the product of any one vineyard, but a blend of many, and it is in this blending, which forms

what is called the *cuvée*, that the talent of the real artist is shown. At a subsequent stage the wine is generally more or less "liqueured," according to the taste of the country it is destined for, but this is not always done, and if no sweetness is added the wine is called "brut." In this state many people prefer it, and there can be no doubt that these dry wines are more wholesome, and also more likely to be of good quality, than the sweeter ones, as "liqueuring" can be made to cover up a good many defects that would soon manifest themselves if it were omitted.

The English, as compared with other nations, are certainly entitled

to credit for their taste in Champagne, and as regards sparkling wines generally. The Frenchman with his Sillery or Saumur, the German with his sparkling Hock and Moselle, the Italian with his Asti Spumante, all favour sweetness, while the Champagne drunk in Russia is like liquid confectionery. The soundness of the English taste is proved by the fact that the drier sparkling wines are far ahead of all others dietetically. Even the French are beginning to appreciate this, and it is nowadays not unusual to see Champagne upon a Frenchman's table with the inscription, "as shipped to England."

For some considerable number

of years attention has been given to producing sparkling wines in parts of France other than the Champagne district, and on the whole with satisfactory results. There is, of course, no secret as to the actual manner of making a sparkling wine, and, given a sufficient variety of suitable grapes to form a *cuvée*, with the requisite skill to carry out the different processes of manufacture, and appropriate cellars in which to store the wine at a low and even temperature, there is no reason why very excellent sparkling wines should not be produced in almost any part of the world, and in point of fact they are now to be found in most countries where wine is

made. Good, however, as many of these wines are, it is generally considered that they lack the delicate *finesse* and flavour of true Champagne, and indeed it may be said, without fear of contradiction, that in good years no sparkling wine in any quarter of the globe can equal the best brands of Rheims and Epernay. These grand wines, however, are only within the reach of the fortunate few, and it is a certain disadvantage to the public at large that the deservedly high reputation of the finest brands should be found in practice to cast a sort of halo over every sparkling wine that comes from the same part of France, and chooses to call itself Champagne. In too many

cases these wines are very far from being what they profess to be, and are often nothing but inferior and unwholesome concoctions "doctored" up to resemble their aristocratic betters, which it is needless to say they only do in respect of the prices charged for them. In place of such impostors as these, well-made sparkling wines from other districts of France, with less pretensions as to name and price, are much to be preferred, and fortunately there is no lack of choice. Sparkling Saumur from the banks of the Loire, and several varieties of sparkling Burgundy are to be had in profusion, and if care is taken in selection they will generally be found

to give satisfaction. A very good sparkling white Médoc is also now making its way in this country, and a rather special interest attaches to this wine, not only on account of its being the youngest of the sparkling family, but because it comes from a district which, although its supremacy in viticultural matters is universally acknowledged, has hitherto been unrepresented by this class of wine.

The above constitute the principal varieties of French wines which are known out of the country itself. Large quantities are produced in the southern provinces, but with the exception of Hermitage, Roussillon and a few

others, they are almost entirely used for home consumption.

French Vintages

	CLARET	BURGUNDY	CHAMPAGNE
1887	Good	Good	Very good
1888	Good	Good	Poor
1889	Good	Good	Very good
1890	Fair	Good	Fair
1891	Good	Good	Poor
1892	Indifferent	Very good	Very good
1893	Very good	Very good	Very good
1894	Poor	Good	Fair
1895	Fair	Very good	Fair
1896	Very good	Good	Poor
1897	Bad	Poor	Poor
1898	Fair	Good	Good
1899	Very good	Very good	Very good
1900	Good	Fair	Very good
1901	Poor	Poor	Fair
1902	Poor	Fair	Poor
1903	Poor	Fair	Poor
1904	Good	Very good	Very good
1905	Good	Fair	Bad

CHAPTER VI

Wines of Germany

IT cannot be denied that some of the finest and most esteemed wines in the world owe their origin to the famous vineyards of Germany, and for this reason, and also on account of the generally high standard of excellence of its produce, the Fatherland is entitled to a very prominent place in the roll of wine-making countries.

The most renowned growths are found in a district called the Rheingau, which is a most prolific stretch of vineyards extending for about ten miles on the right

bank of the Rhine between Mayence and Rüdesheim. It is said that the vine was first cultivated in these parts as early as the third century, and was subsequently very greatly extended by mediæval monks, particularly those of the monasteries of Johannisberg and Eberbach. The principal vineyards lie between the Taunus mountains in the north and the Rhine in the south. They are well sheltered from cold winds, and though the climate is not always all that could be desired, the locality is, on the whole, favourable for viticultural products. Here towns, villages and castles give distinctive names to a host of different wines, the most famous

of which come from the vineyards of Schloss Johannisberg and Steinberg. These two celebrated wines are made with the utmost care from specially selected grapes, and they are universally renowned for their wonderful richness, delicacy and fragrant bouquet. Other choice growths to be found in this neighbourhood are Rüdesheim, Marcobrun and Rauenthal, and on the opposite side of the river we find the well-known Liebfraumilch, a wine of fine bouquet and flavour, which, possibly on account of the singularity of the name, is about the most popular wine in Germany. A famous vineyard on the banks of the Main supplies the celebrated

Hochheimer, said to have been the earliest Rhenish wine known in this country; hence the corrupted name "Hock," under which the Rhine wines have been classed ever since.

There are numerous other good white wines made in this district, but comparatively few red ones; Assmanshäuser, an interesting wine of a Burgundy character, being the only one that is much known.

The general characteristics of Moselle wines are very similar to those of the Rhine, but they are, as a rule, rather more acid, and have less body. Among the best known are the famous and legendary Berncastler Doctor, Scharz-

hofberg and Brauneberger, but, as in the case of Hocks also, a great number of first-class varieties come to this country under various names, and figure in more or less profusion in all wine lists.

As a result of the comparative coolness and uncertainty of the climate in the Rhine and Moselle districts, the grapes frequently do not attain a proper degree of ripeness, and, in consequence, the wines are often found to contain an excess of acid. On the other hand it is the presence of a comparatively high degree of acid, in combination with the alcohol, which contributes so largely to the formation of the ethereal products distinctive of these wines. These

ethers go to make up the exquisite bouquet which pervades the finer Hocks and Moselles, and which is often so conspicuously absent from wines made in more southern countries, where the grape arrives at a greater degree of sweetness.

In good years, and when they are well made, the wines of Germany are exceedingly pleasant and wholesome beverages, particularly suitable for hot weather, and to have drunk a deep draught of cool Rhenish on a blazing day in a vine-clad bower on the banks of the romantic and legendary river, or under the shadow of one of its crumbling towers, is to have laid up a memory which does not soon pass away. Owing, however,

to the practices of certain enterprising firms who periodically inundate this country with circulars, setting forth, among other things, the advantages of "buying direct from the grower," and offering well-known wines at ridiculously low prices, it has become especially necessary of late for purchasers to be on their guard as to the source of their supplies. The wines so advertised are generally worthless, if not positively injurious, and if the receivers of these circulars would take the trouble to make a few inquiries before giving their orders, they would probably find that in the majority of cases the firms in question were neither growers

themselves nor people with whom any respectable grower would care to have any dealings. To avoid disappointment and loss, therefore, it is advisable to abstain from taking advantage of the "bargains" which are brought to one's notice in this way, or indeed in any of the many other ways with which modern ingenuity and fraud seek to impose upon the ignorant and unwary, and to deal only with respectable wine merchants whose reputation and experience are guarantees as to the genuineness and quality of whatever comes from their cellars.

In addition to Hocks and Moselles, Germany produces a great many other good wines, but they

are not much known out of their own country.

Hock and Moselle Vintages

1887	Bad	1897	Good
1888	Bad	1898	Bad
1889	Fair	1899	Fair
1890	Good	1900	Very good
1891	Bad	1901	Poor
1892	Fair	1902	Fair
1893	Excellent	1903	Fair
1894	Bad	1904	Very good
1895	Good	1905	Poor
1896	Poor		

CHAPTER VII

Wines of Spain

SPAIN is one of the principal wine-producing countries of Europe, but though a great many sorts of Spanish wine are made and exported she has always been more closely identified in this country with Sherry than with any other variety.

This wine derives its name from Jerez in Andalusia, which is the headquarters of the trade, and it is a wine which is essentially Spanish, nothing like it being produced in any other country. There are several varieties of

Sherry, but for the purposes of general description they may be divided into two classes: the "fino," which is a pale, delicate, dry wine of the Amontillado type ; and the "Oloroso," a more full-bodied, richer and deeper-coloured wine.

Fine, well-matured Sherry is full of vinosity, and contains a very high proportion of ethereal products. These particular qualities have always been considered as rendering it exceedingly valuable as a stimulant and restorative, and for this reason it was formerly much in favour with medical men in cases of illness, and in the debility of old age. At one time it was also, as is well known, exceedingly popular in this country

as an everyday beverage, and no dinner table was complete without it. Times, however, have greatly changed in this respect, and in consequence of the very questionable habit having sprung up of drinking whisky instead of wine, the consumption of Sherry, as also of many other wines, has fallen off to a very considerable extent. It is satisfactory to note, however, that doctors, and sensible people generally, are beginning to see the evil which is likely to follow from this change in the national habits, and also the hardly less baneful effects to health which are connected with extreme teetotalism, and signs are not wanting that wine is

gradually re-establishing itself in public favour.

There are many well-known and old-established shippers of Sherry, and excellent wine can always be procured from proper sources. It must be remembered, however, that such a wine as this cannot be produced very cheaply, and though, with perhaps the exception of Claret, there is, in the present day, better value to be obtained in Sherry than in any other wine, a reasonable price must always be paid; and if health is valued the cheap, but generally fictitious, concoctions bottled by ordinary grocers and wineshops should be carefully avoided.

Besides Sherry, Spain produces

a great many other wines, some of which form a considerable portion of her trade with this country. Tarragona, from the province of Catalonia, which is one of the best known, is a rich, spirituous, red wine, largely used to blend with other wines, but is also sold as Spanish Port. Val de Pênas from the central provinces is a natural, full-bodied wine of the Burgundy type, and with Rioja and Malaga has a certain market in England, but the consumption of most of the other varieties is confined to their own country.

Wines of Portugal

Although Portugal produces a large quantity of wine, practically the only variety known in this country is Port, a beverage which our ancestors had a much more intimate acquaintance with than their descendants of this generation can boast of.

This wine is the produce of the Alto Douro, and takes its name from the seaport of Oporto. It is a rich, generous, full-bodied wine of which, roughly speaking, there are two distinct classes, tawny or draught Ports, which have been matured in casks, and are comparatively light in colouring, and Ports of rather a fuller colour,

which have been bottled a few years after the vintage and require to be kept for some time before drinking.

Port belongs to the fortified class of wines, and spirit is added not only during the primary fermentation, but at frequent intervals afterwards to prevent further fermentation. The effect of this treatment is to preserve the richness and keeping properties of the wine, but somewhat at the expense of its vinosity and wholesomeness.

During the greater part of the nineteenth century Port enjoyed a very special distinction, and was, perhaps, the most popular wine in England. Of late years, how-

ever, it has rather fallen from its high estate, though the finer vintages may always be expected to hold their own up to a certain point. The decline in the consumption of this and other old-time favourites, which has been so noticeable among a certain section of the community for some time past, is probably due, to some extent, to an increased taste for lighter and more natural wines, but also, perhaps, in a greater degree, as has been mentioned before, to the use that is now made of spirits as an everyday beverage. This can hardly be considered a change for the better so far as refinement of taste and personal health are concerned, and it

is much to be hoped that people will soon realise the deleterious effects of spirit drinking, and will return to the more natural, and infinitely more wholesome, juice of the grape.

Madeira

Half-a-century ago the wines produced in the lovely island of Madeira had a reputation such as few other wines have ever attained to, and no cellar was considered complete without a goodly stock of "Old Madeira." The name was one to conjure with, and take pride in, but unfortunately evil times fell upon the Island soon after the middle of the last century, and, owing to disease attack-

ing the vines, the production of wine came practically to an end, and old stocks were only to be had at very high prices. This naturally caused the wine to be somewhat lost sight of for a good many years, but in course of time the disease was completely overcome, and new vines planted, with the result that for some time past many choice wines have reached this country from the Island, which are said to be in every way equal to their illustrious predecessors.

There are several varieties of Madeira, but, speaking generally, it may be described as a full-bodied wine with a marked vinous and somewhat nutty flavour, and a very choice aroma. It

greatly improves with age, and its mellowness and general quality are supposed to be very considerably enhanced by a sea voyage to a hot climate, such as the East Indies, and wines that have really made this voyage have a special value attaching to them.

"Good wine," it is said, "needs no bush"; and good "Old Madeira" needs no recommendation to those who have ever been fortunate enough to possess any. It is, therefore, a matter for congratulation that this beautiful wine with all its prestige and associations is not going to be lost to us, but is again asserting its right to be classed amongst the choicest and

most aristocratic occupants of our cellars.

Wines of Teneriffe

The history of the wine trade in the Canary Islands commences towards the close of the fifteenth century when vines were imported from Crete. From these vines were produced the famous Malmsey wines and the Canary sack, which enjoyed for centuries a very considerable reputation, and were constantly referred to in the writings of the great Elizabethan poets and authors. From the terms of universal commendation in which they are mentioned, by these and later writers, it is evident that the wines were thought

very highly of in England, and they remained more or less in favour till about the middle of the nineteenth century. About that time, however, disease attacked the vines, and the wine trade for some considerable time came quite to a standstill. The replanting of the vines, however, has been proceeding for many years past, and as the paucity of the exports has led to the accumulation of large stocks in the merchants' cellars, very good value can now be obtained in these historical old wines.

Port and Sherry Vintages

	PORT	SHERRY
1887	Very good	Fair
1888	Fair	Good
1889	Fair	Fair
1890	Good	Good
1891	Fair	Good
1892	Good	Good
1893	Bad	Fair
1894	Fair	Good
1895	Bad	Good
1896	Good	Good
1897	Good	Good
1898	Bad	Good
1899	Fair	Poor
1900	Good	Good
1901	Fair	Fair
1902	Fair	Fair
1903	Fair	Good
1904	Good	Good
1905	Poor	Good

CHAPTER VIII

Wines of Italy and Sicily

ITALY, on account of her geographical position, has great natural advantages as a wine-producing country, and as regards quantity she ranks very high among European nations. The soil is good and, under the eyes of an almost tropical sun, the grapes ripen to perfection. Wine is the staple drink of the people, but enough is made to allow of large quantities being exported to all parts of the world, and though formerly the mode of manufacture left a great deal to be desired, of

late years there has been a marked improvement in this respect and the general excellence of some of the principal varieties have won for them a considerable reputation.

Chianti, which is grown on the sunny hills of Tuscany, is generally considered to be the best type of Italian wine. It is somewhat of a Claret character, full-bodied and robust, and the best qualities are thought very highly of. The Montepulciano variety is generally most acceptable to English taste, and it is not difficult to obtain, but it must be understood that everything is not Chianti which is sold in a straw-clad flask with tassels.

Another notable wine is Lacri-

ma Cristi, which, probably, like the Liebfraumilch of the Rhineland, owes part of its vogue to its curious name.

Asti, a sparkling white wine, enjoys some popularity as a cheap substitute for Champagne, but it is generally too sweet for English palates, and is not much drunk in this country. Barolo is another good wine, somewhat resembling Burgundy; and white Capri, from the island of that name in the Bay of Naples, is a delicate wine of a Chablis type which is a great favourite with many people on account of its delightfully fresh and winey flavour.

Perhaps the chief thing to be said for the wines of Italy is that

they compare favourably with many others for purity and naturalness, and in drinking them one can be practically sure of having nothing but the fermented juice of the grape.

Sicily

Sicily produces wine in great abundance, but the principal one known in this country is Marsala. This wine rather resembles Madeira, and the best qualities have a fine flavour and bouquet. It is somewhat fortified, but when well made may be considered a wholesome wine, and much to be preferred to many Sherries at the same price.

Wines of Austria

Austria produces a very large quantity of wine of varying degrees of merit, but practically the only varieties known in this country come from the famous Goldeck vineyards, at Vöslau, near Vienna. The cultivation of the vine on this celebrated estate has been brought to the highest state of perfection, and all the processes of manufacture are carried out in the most approved principles by the owner, Herr Schlumberger, whose reputation is world-wide and whose name is synonymous with a profound and enlightened knowledge of everything pertaining to the vine and its fruit.

Several varieties of both red and white wines are produced, specifically known as Vöslauer, Vöslau Goldeck and Vöslau Goldeck Cabinet. Speaking generally, the red ones resemble Burgundy and the white Chablis and Hock.

These wines are invariably well made, well matured and of a very high standard of excellence, and it can safely be affirmed that no purer wines exist at the present day than those which come from those famous vineyards.

Wines of Hungary

Hungary, both on the ground of quality and quantity, is undoubtedly entitled to take high rank among the wine-producing countries of the world. As in the case of the Rheingau, it is supposed that the vine was introduced here some time during the third century, and the monks of the Middle Ages are credited with having given special attention to its growth and development. History is unfortunately silent as to the particular varieties of wine which the old Abbots and Priors stored in their capacious cellars, but there is reason to believe that the famous Tokay was not unknown,

and that it was as much appreciated by the jovial *bons vivants* of those days as it has been ever since.

This wonderful wine, with a halo of tradition surrounding it, and commanding higher prices than almost any other wine in the world, is made from the juice which exudes from the finest overripe grapes, and it is considered to have almost magical effects as a restorative in cases of extreme illness. The finest quality is not, however, produced in any quantity, and it is practically unobtainable from ordinary sources. Travellers in German towns should especially beware of the flasks of thick liquid sold as Tokay

in the small grocers' shops. Like the sham Eau-de-Cologne and the poisonous "Cognac" purveyed to guileless tourists on the quays of Rotterdam and Boulogne, this detestable syrup is simply made to sell. Its makers are wholesale chemists, whose crowning act of impudence is to adorn the "Tokay" labels with the legend, *In vino veritas*. In extenuation of their ill-doing they plead that the mixture does truly contain some useful medicaments. This may be so, but the sugariness of bogus Tokay is very different from the sweetness of the genuine article, and must go a long way towards neutralising any beneficial effects which might flow from the vaunted

drugs. In short, authentic Tokay is so rare that only the most honourable wine merchants should be entrusted with one's commission to obtain it.

Of the other wines of Hungary the best-known red ones are Carlowitz, Erlauer and Ofner, and of the white, Somlau and Oedenburg. They possess respectively a certain resemblance to Burgundy and Hock, but usually have rather more body and strength. Immense quantities of wine are produced in this country, and the best qualities may be considered, dietetically, as filling an important place in our list of beverages.

CHAPTER IX

Wines of Australia

THE climate of Australia can hardly be said to be in all respects suited to the successful production of wine. Droughts are frequent, as are also heavy rains, and such conditions, alternating, are not favourable to the vine. The great heat at the time of the vintage constitutes also a difficulty which ordinary methods cannot effectually deal with, and which modern science cannot be expected always entirely to overcome.

It is claimed for these wines that they have their own special

characteristics, and make their own standard, that they have created a new and distinct type of wine, and that it is as unreasonable to judge Australian wines by continental growths as to compare Port with the production of the Médoc. However this may be, and whether it is unreasonable or not to compare Australian wines with European ones, the fact remains that the ordinary consumer who knows anything about wine will undoubtedly make the comparison, and, up to the present at least, the balance of advantage has not been on the side of the Colonial wines.

It does not seem likely that

Australian vintners will ever endeavour to enter into effective rivalry with the vignerons of Europe, but in the event of their desiring Englishmen to take the wines of the Antipodes seriously, Australians must conform to French and German practice as regards the classification of their produce. At present, by far the greater part of the annual output is mixed together and shipped under the name of "Australian Burgundy," with no description beyond the shipper's name or brand. For the unexacting palates of the masses, who are content to ask no questions so long as a florin or half-a-crown will purchase a roomy flagon of strong, full-bodied,

fruity wine, this policy may serve very well; but the connoisseur must not be expected to show much interest in the matter until he is in a position to compare one vineyard or region with another, and also to contrast different years. From the nature of the case a good year in Europe may be a very bad one under the Southern Cross, and it follows, therefore, that labels should be dated, and information as to the successful years supplied. When they are challenged on the subject, patriotic Australians often declare that their Continent yields several named Clarets and Burgundies of great distinction and refinement; but they add that the small supplies of these wines are

consumed by Australians themselves. It is a pity that a hogshead or two cannot be spared for the benefit of the Old Country ; but until this is done Englishmen must not be blamed for their scepticism or indifference.

Wines of California

California, with its many natural advantages, can justly claim a place among the principal wine-producing countries of the world. Its climate is very uniform, and well adapted to vine cultivation, and in that respect it has a great advantage over Europe, where difficulties are often to be met with on account of the seasons being variable and uncertain. The

soil in the wine-growing districts is also said to resemble closely that of some of the notable vineyards in France, and as climate and soil are very important factors in wine production—nationality not counting for much in the final result—it is not surprising that these wines find a certain amount of favour in some quarters. The best ones are the natural dry varieties, and of these the white wines chiefly resemble the German Hocks. Of the red varieties the Burgundy types are perhaps the best, and some fair Clarets are produced, but the absence of fuller information renders these wines less interesting than they might otherwise be.

CHAPTER X

The Cellar and Treatment of Wines

IN the popular mind wine is too often classed with those things which are supposed to be endowed with the inherent power of looking after themselves. As a matter of fact, however, to view it in this way is to make a very great mistake, for not only does the actual preservation of wine in a state fit to drink largely depend upon the treatment it receives, and the place it is kept in, but, short of its being entirely spoilt, any carelessness and neglect in respect of

the treatment accorded to it is sure to be followed by a deterioration in its quality, and the loss of those vinous properties and ethereal products which can only arrive at perfection if the maturing processes of nature are allowed to proceed under conditions which are favourable to their growth and development.

In the first place then it is of the utmost importance that, whether wine is in casks or bottles, there should be a proper cellar to keep it in. This should be dry and well ventilated, and, if possible, underground, where a fairly even temperature can be maintained at all seasons of the year. This temperature should be about 55° Fahren-

heit, but a few degrees one way or the other is not of much consequence, the important point being that there should be no marked or sudden variations. If the cellar, or other place of storage, is likely to be exposed to extremes of cold it will be necessary to adopt some means of warming it, but, unless there is good ventilation, gas should never be used, as the effect of burning it for even a short time in a small cellar is to raise the temperature very considerably, with a corresponding fall afterwards; and, in addition, it vitiates the atmosphere in a way that is likely to be very injurious to delicate wines. Apart from any artificial heating, however, there will al-

ways be a slight difference in the degree of warmth of the top bins as compared with the lower ones, owing to the tendency of warm air to rise, and, in consequence of this, it is best, in arranging wine, to bin the light varieties such as Hocks, Moselles and all sparkling wines, at the bottom, Clarets and Burgundies in the middle, and Sherry and other fortified wines in the top bins. It is hardly necessary to say that bottles should always be laid on their sides, as the wine would soon deteriorate if stood upright, and Port should be so placed that the chalk mark is uppermost.

Air, which is good for most things, is a great enemy to wine,

and it is therefore very important that corks should be in good order, and decanters well-stoppered. Wine should also always be consumed as soon as possible after the bottle has been opened, as the lighter varieties, of the Claret, Hock and Burgundy type, are hardly fit to drink if they are kept for even two or three days after being decanted, and though the fortified wines, such as Sherry and Port, will last rather longer, they are certainly not the better for it.

It is always best to decant wine before serving, and although this may seem a very simple operation, there is nevertheless a right way and a wrong way of doing

it. A glass of wine when it is poured out should be perfectly clear and bright, and in order that it may be so, the wine in the decanter must be in a similar condition. This, at all events in the case of old wines which throw a deposit, depends entirely upon the care that has been taken in drawing the cork and transferring the wine from the bottle to the decanter, and the operation is a delicate one. To begin with, the bottle should not be seized ruthlessly from its place in the bin, swayed about, turned upside down perhaps, and treated generally like a bottle of medicine whose ingredients have to be well mixed before being taken, but it should be

removed gently, and stood upright for several hours before it is required. The cork should then be slowly drawn, and the wine poured carefully into the decanter. As soon as the deposit approaches the neck, which can easily be seen by having a lighted candle on the other side of the bottle, the pouring must cease, and the wine in the decanter will then be found to be perfectly clear. In the case of comparatively light wines of everyday use this elaboration is not, of course, necessary, but more care is required in the decanting of wines than is generally given to them, and where there is any chance of a deposit, it is better to err on the safe side than

to run the risk of showing any disrespect to a good wine.

The habit of warming such wines as Claret and Burgundy is not to be recommended, and in cold weather it is quite sufficient if they are brought up from the cellar into a warm room a few hours before being opened. If they are too much warmed the bouquet evaporates, and the delicate freshness of the wine is spoilt. Ice should never be put into wine as it is merely another way of watering it. The right way to cool it is to place the bottle in ice previously to being served, but it is a great mistake to make good wine too cold as, by doing so, much of the flavour is lost.

Few people seem to realise that, apart altogether from the gratification which comes from partaking of an exhilarating and healthy beverage, there is a genuine pleasure to be derived from the mere possession of even a very moderate assortment of good wines which, with a little discrimination and forethought, or advice, almost anyone can indulge himself with at a reasonable price if he goes the right way to work about it. Not only is this a very interesting occupation in itself, but when a collection has been made, to enter one's cellar is an event which can hardly fail to bring with it many pleasurable and refining sensations, which amply repay the

trouble that has been taken, and which those who have felt them would not willingly forego. To conjure up the history of the various living and seductive forces which rest so peacefully side by side, unconscious, in their quiet dignity, of the high and lofty part they have to play in making glad the human heart, and bringing health and vigour to human lives; to let the mind wander "in fancy free" to other lands; to pass with lingering affection from the stately châteaux and glorious vineyards of the famous Médoc, to the sunny slopes of the Côte d'Or; from the smiling and joyous vines of the Marne to the sombre and old-world castles of the Rhine; to

cross the portals of this world of mythical romance with reverence, as in the presence of unknown and mystical powers, is to enter, for a time at least, into another existence, and to experience in some degree the feeling that must have inspired the great poets of old who sang so lovingly of the divine juice of the grape ; and which must also have impelled the jovial ecclesiastics of days gone by to train and nurture the vine with a care and skill that has never been surpassed, and for which succeeding generations will owe them a debt of gratitude for all time.

For the guidance of those who may be thinking of stocking a small inexpensive cellar, the fol-

lowing list of wines is suggested. The original cost would not exceed £20, and as each variety ran out a change might be made by ordering a different wine of the same, or some other class. In this way experience would be accumulated, taste cultivated, and an interest in a fascinating subject awakened. Any good wine merchant would be only too pleased to give technical and practical advice to suit individual tastes or health, and much valuable information can be acquired in this way which will stand one in good stead on many occasions. It may be mentioned also, as there is some misunderstanding on the matter, that small consumers need have no misgiv-

ings in going to first-class merchants for their wines, either on the ground of ignorance of the subject, or that their orders might be deemed too insignificant to be worth executing. In point of fact it is absolutely necessary that they should procure their supplies from such sources, if they wish them to be pure and wholesome ; and by going to a firm of experience and repute who confine their attention to their own business and do not mix it up with half-a-dozen others, they will not only ensure this but they may at the same time be confident that their regular, though perchance modest, orders will be as welcome and as well attended to as if they were on a larger scale.

CELLAR & TREATMENT

In the following list it is assumed that Claret is the principal wine in daily use.

			£	s.	d.
4 doz.	Claret	@ 18/- =	3	12	0
1 „	Claret	@ 36/- =	1	16	0
1 „	Burgundy	@ 36/- =	1	16	0
1 „	Beaujolais	@ 20/- =	1	0	0
1 „	Sauterne and Graves	@ 24/- =	1	4	0
1 „	Chablis	@ 24/- =	1	4	0
2 „	Hock and Moselle	@ 30/- =	3	0	0
½ „	Port	@ 50/- =	1	5	0
½ „	Sherry	@ 40/- =	1	0	0
1 „	Sparkling Wine	@ 50/- =	2	10	0
	Sundries		1	13	0
			£20	0	0

CHAPTER XI

Brandy

THE habit of drinking spirits is one that, generally speaking, cannot be commended, and the doubtful origin and poor quality of much that is on the market in the present day render the habit more than ever undesirable. When, however, for medical or other considerations, wine has to be given up, a virtue must be made of necessity and recourse must, perforce, be had to some form of spirit. In such cases it is, of course, all-important that a wise choice should be made, and general ex-

perience seems to point to Brandy, of which excellent qualities can now be obtained, as being by far the best one to adopt.

This spirit, which is a sort of concentrated wine, is to be found, with varying degrees of merit, in all parts of the grape-growing world. The most esteemed Brandy, however, is that which is made in the department of the Charente in France, and the term "Cognac," by which the best French Brandy is generally known, is derived from a small town of that name, which is the centre of the trade. The wines themselves of the Charente are unpalatable as table beverages, and it is only when they have been made beautifully less

by distillation that their hidden excellence is brought to light.

When it is first distilled, Brandy is almost a colourless liquid and of rather a fiery character, but by being kept in cask it takes up colour from the wood, becomes softer and more fragrant, and goes on improving with age. The dark colour of brown Brandy is generally produced by means of a solution of caramel, and this is sometimes added in large quantities to give a rich appearance to Brandies of inferior quality.

Good Brandy has always been looked upon as a most valuable medicine and restorative in cases of illness and exhaustion, and at one time it was also largely used

as a beverage. About thirty years ago, however, all the vines of the Cognac district were destroyed by disease, and Brandy becoming dearer and more difficult to get, other and less desirable spirits took its place, and in consequence of this, and of spurious imitations being put upon the market, the genuine article was for a long time under a cloud. The vines in the Charente were, however, in course of time replanted, and real Cognac, being now as good and plentiful as ever, is fast reasserting its superiority over other spirits, and regaining its old undisputed supremacy. This is easily to be understood, for Brandy, being distilled from wine and being therefore

directly derived from the grape, is naturally very much to be preferred to spirits distilled from cheaper and coarser materials, particularly as the by-products from these commoner spirits are often distinctly injurious.

Although the wine from which Brandy is distilled is very cheap in the locality in which it is made, it will readily be recognised that good Brandy can never be sold at a low figure, inasmuch as it takes from six to eight bottles of wine to make one bottle of Brandy. Further the capital sunk in the Brandy industry is very tardily turned over, as the spirit must lie for years in wood before it is fit for use. A reasonable price must therefore

always be paid for it, and to guard against inferior qualities and fraudulent adulterations, when ordering Brandy the name of some reputable firm should always be insisted upon.

For medicinal use fine old Brandy, on account of the large proportion of vinous ethers it contains, is absolutely invaluable and quite without a rival ; and as an everyday beverage for those to whom wine is debarred there can be no better or more wholesome stimulant.

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